

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2024

# Seventh Sunday after Trinity



If you're a fan of "Horrible Histories," you will know about some of the gory goings-on in the past, but we don't usually expect such a "Ghastly Gospel"!

The gospels usually tell us about Jesus's teaching, his stories, his healings – things which leave us feeling good. Today's gospel is difficult, but it is important to know what happened, firstly because John the Baptist played a vital part in the story of Jesus, and secondly because every single story in the gospels has something important to teach us - even if it is difficult.

This sad story of Herod and his family helps us to think about the responsibility we all have for our words and actions, and about the making and keeping of promises.

The Herod in question here is Herod Antipas – a nasty piece of work! He followed on from his father, Herod "the Great" (or not so great, considering that he was the king Herod at the Jesus's birth, from whom the Holy Family had to flee to Egypt). Herod Antipas had divorced his wife to hook up with his brother's wife and this story involves her and her young daughter, who was obviously a brilliant dancer! At least, Herod thought so, and we have heard what happened as a result.

Have you ever been asked to do something, or to go along with something, that you knew, deep inside, was wrong? Sometimes we get into trouble for doing things that we know in our hearts are wrong, but it's hard to say "no" when our friends are doing them, isn't it? Have you ever heard yourself saying to your parents, "but everyone else was doing it"?

This story helps us to remember that the choices we make are our own and we have to take personal responsibility. The girl in the story didn't know what to ask for when Herod offered her whatever she wanted, so she asked her mother. Do you think she should have gone along with what her mother told her to ask for, when it involved killing a man? Because Herod had made a promise to the girl in front of all his friends and many important people, when she asked for something so terrible, he didn't want to lose face and felt he had to go along with it. Do you think this was a promise he should have kept or would it have been better to break his promise, rather than do such an awful thing?

Thankfully, we are rarely faced with the sort of decisions that were made in this story, but it is a reminder to each of us that, if we are asked to make choices that we just know would be wrong, it is so important to have the strength and the courage to say no.

The wonderful thing for us is that, whenever we are faced with difficult decisions, we have a helper – God's Holy Spirit. If we ask, God will help us to know what is right - and which decision we should make – but we need to listen!



Prayer for this week: Dear God, sometimes we are faced with such hard choices. Fill us with your Holy Spirit and give us the wisdom and strength we need to live our lives in a way that pleases you. Amen.

Can you make this into a picture of you?

God Cares About You!

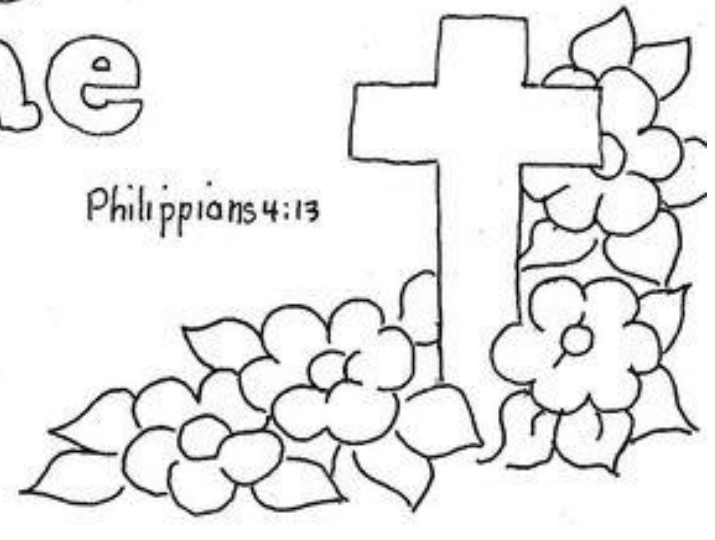
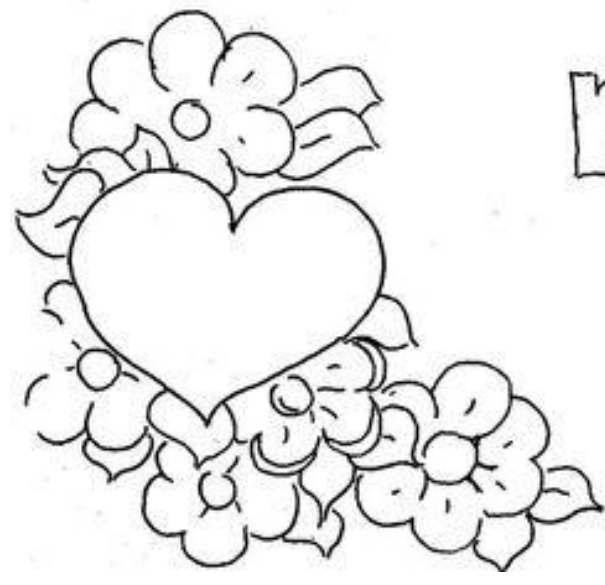


**"Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered"**  
(Matthew 10:30, NIV)





I can do  
 all things  
 through  
 Christ who  
 strengthens  
 me



Philippians 4:13